

**GUIDELINES TO INTERPRETATION OF REQUIREMENTS FOR AN APPROVED
REGISTERED DENTAL ASSISTANT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, AS DEFINED BY
THE STATE BOARD OF DENTAL EXAMINERS IN TITLE 16, CALIFORNIA
CODE OF REGULATIONS SECTIONS 1070 AND 1070.1**

I. EDUCATIONAL SETTING - Section 1070.1(a)

An acceptable setting for a dental assisting educational program is a school which has as its primary purpose providing Postsecondary education.

II. COMMUNITY RESOURCES/ADVISORY COMMITTEE - Section 1070.1(b)

A. Purpose

The advisory committee should server as one resource for the administration and faculty in matters such as student recruitment, employment requirements and opportunities, curriculum and facilities. The input of the committee should be given due consideration by the administrators and faculty, but the final authority and responsibility for the program must rest within the institution.

B. Appointment

In appointing the advisory committee, the institution should seek recommendations from local dental and dental assisting societies. Appointment terms should be established to provide new input as well as continuity. Membership shall include at least 2 dentists and 2 registered dental assistants.

C. Meetings

The advisory committee should meet at regular and frequent intervals as the program is being developed. After the program has been implemented, it is expected that the committee will continue to meet regularly (at least twice per year) to monitor the ongoing quality and performance of the program. The program director, faculty and appropriate institutional personnel should participate in the meetings to receive the advice and assistance of the committee.

III. ADMINISTRATION/PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR - Section 1070.1(c)(1)

A. Appointment

The program administrator is responsible for day-to-day administration of the dental assisting program and should have a full-time commitment to the program. Such appointment should be made far enough in advance of projected enrollment dates to allow time for review and or development of curriculum, facilities, equipment procurement and faculty resources. The program administrator must have a teaching load that is less than other faculty to provide time for other administrative duties.

IV. FACULTY - Section 1070.1(c)(2) and (3)

A. Qualifications

Any faculty member who is a dental assistant shall have a valid license as a California registered dental assistant and be proficient in California expanded duties, including coronal polishing and radiography. Instructors should have educational backgrounds that exceed their teaching responsibilities.

B. Number

The appropriate number of instructors will be determined by the amount of time needed for student contact hour load, course responsibilities, preparation time and time for evaluating students while performing procedures.

C. Faculty/Student Ratios

One instructor to 10 students is recommended during scheduled laboratory instruction in manipulation of dental materials and chairside assisting, and 1 instructor to 6 students for radiographic procedures. These ratios are important because individual instruction must be provided to assure development of the number of students directly involved in the specific procedure being instructed. More than 14 students will require additional faculty.

D. Release Time

Opportunities for professional development in dental assisting and registered dental assisting education should be provided. Release time and financial support for each instructor to attend at least one conference or workshop related to these areas of education each year is desirable.

E. Participation in Administration

Faculty meetings should be held regularly to provide for subject matter correlation and curriculum evaluation and to coordinate faculty activities.

F. Supportive Services

Secretarial and clerical staff should be assigned to assist the dental assisting program administrator and faculty in preparing course materials, typing correspondence, and maintaining student records; and to provide supportive services for student recruitment activities and admission.

G. Guest Lecturer

Programs are encouraged to have dentists and auxiliaries lecture or demonstrate clinical procedures in the program facility.

V. FINANCIAL SUPPORT - Section 1070.1(d)

It is expected that the ability to replace and add equipment, reference materials and teaching aids will be reflected in annual budget appropriations. Allocations for supplies and travel required to supervise off-campus clinical practice should be sufficient to carry out the instructional program. Satisfactory evidence of adherence to these guidelines may be provided by either of the following:

1. Proof of institutional accreditation by any commission or accrediting agency approved by the board.
2. Current approval by the California Department of Education or the Council for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education.

VI. ADMISSION - Section 1070(a)

A. Criteria

It is expected that the program administration and faculty will establish criteria and procedures for admission to the program. A high school diploma, or a level deemed equivalent thereto, should be required for admission. A student who demonstrates an ability to benefit may also be admitted. Applicants to the program should be informed of admission criteria, program requirements, dental assistant and RDA functions, required licenses and certificates, and employment opportunities.

VII. FACILITIES - Section 1070.1(e)

A. General

The adequacy of the program facilities is determined, in part, on the basis of student enrollment and the availability of other institutional facilities, such as classrooms and library or learning center. Lighting and ventilation of all facilities should be consistent with standards for health.

B. Classrooms

Classroom space should be provided for and be readily accessible to the program. If classrooms are used by other programs, there should be enough flexibility in scheduling their use to accommodate demands imposed by the dental assisting curriculum.

Classroom size should accommodate the number of students enrolled. Classrooms should be equipped with chalkboard or whiteboard, projection equipment, electrical outlets, adequate lighting and light controls to enable viewing of audio-visual materials.

C. Pre-Clinical Facility

An adequate pre-clinical facility permits one operator to be used by no more than five students at any one time. One training manikin of typodont description with simulated face shall be provided for each operator. It is recommended that 1 typodont and bench mount be provided for each student; however, there must be at least 1 typodont and bench mount for each 2 students. The typodont must have full dentition and soft gingivae and be in good working order. In all cases, provisions should be made for each student to have opportunities to use the clinical equipment and to develop basic chairside skills in dental assisting and registered dental assisting with faculty supervision prior to off-campus clinical assignments.

D. Operatories

An operatory shall be deemed to be adequate if it meets the following requirements.

1. Each operatory shall contain functional, modern equipment, including a power operated chair for treating patients in a supine position, and dental units designed for application of current principles of dental assistant and registered dental assistant utilization.

2. The number and location of utility outlets should allow flexibility in equipment placement and assure adequate safety measures.
3. The size of the operatory should accommodate an operator and a patient as well as students and faculty.
4. The facility design should permit optimal traffic flow.
5. Each operatory shall include support equipment such as water-air syringe, an adjustable light, a slow-speed and high-speed handpiece, oral evacuation equipment, work surfaces for the assistant, a view box, hand-washing sinks, sterilizing equipment and any hand or power instruments required to instruct the duties assignable to dental assistants and registered dental assistants.

E. Sterilizing Area

A sterilizing area shall be deemed to be adequate if it meets the following requirements:

The sterilizing area should be located near the operatories and include space for preparing, sterilizing and storing instruments and preparing procedure trays. Heat activated or chemical sterilizing equipment must be available to assure the practice of current accepted disease prevention and infection control procedures, including CAL-OSHA requirements.

F. Emergency Materials

Emergency materials shall be deemed adequate if they meet the following requirements:

Full (at least 15 minutes) oxygen tank with regulator and positive pressure mask should be available in a facility. Necessary medical and dental emergency materials for treating patients with life-threatening conditions should be available for instruction and be accessible to the operatories. Facilities in which patients are not treated must maintain a working model of a kit of such emergency materials for instructional purposes.

G. Armamentarium

Armamentarium shall be deemed adequate if it meets the following requirements:

The number and variety of hand instruments shall accommodate students' needs in learning to identify and exchange instruments, prepare procedural trays, and assist

in diagnostic, operative and specialty procedures which are part of general dentistry. One preassembled tray setup for each procedure should be provided for reference purposes. Additionally there should be at least 2 sets of hand instruments per procedure for every 3 students during instruction of clinical and lab procedures. There must be at least one functional high-speed and 1 functional low-speed handpiece for each dental operatory.

H. Radiography Facilities

1. Approval

A radiographic facility shall be deemed adequate if it fully complies with California radiation control regulations (17 California Code of Regulations, Sections 30100 through 30468), is properly equipped for practical work and includes for every six students at least one functioning, adequately filtered and collimated radiography machine in compliance with the Department of Health Services regulations and which is equipped with the appropriate position indicating devices for each technique being taught.

2. Space Necessary

The radiography operatory should provide space for the instructor, student and patient. The operatory shall be equipped with a completely adjustable dental chair and a handwashing sink which should be located in or adjacent to the radiographic operatory. Intraoral film holders, a radiography teaching manikin (at least 1 adult DXTRR-type) and safe storage for film before and after exposure must also be provided. There must be a lead apron with a thyroid collar for each radiographic unit. There should be view boxes and space for students to mount, view and evaluate radiographs.

I. Darkroom

A darkroom shall be deemed adequate if it meets the following requirements:

The darkroom must provide space for students and instructors and be properly equipped for practical work.

Darkroom equipment should include water temperature control valve(s), a safe light, a work surface, processing tanks, and film dryer or hanging racks. Provision should be made to assure that film will not be damaged or lost.

J. Laboratory

A laboratory shall be deemed adequate if it meets the following requirements.

If the laboratory enrollment requires that two or more sessions be scheduled, it must be demonstrated that time is available for all students to obtain required laboratory experience and that acceptable faculty loads are maintained.

Equipment

- a. The laboratory area should contain modern equipment. Space should be sufficient for students to perform procedures with instructor supervision.
- b. Sinks and plaster control devices should be adequate in number to promote cleanliness and efficiency.
- c. The location and number of general use equipment, such as, lathes, model trimmers and vibrators, should allow each student the access needed to develop proficiency in performing procedures. Safety glasses are required for each piece of equipment.
- d. Dental lab engines are required in a ratio of 1 per every 3 students during lab procedures.

E. Faculty Offices

It is suggested that offices for the program administrator and faculty be provided for effective use of time designated for class preparation and student counseling. Space for secretarial personnel and storage of student and program records should be available.

F. Extended Facilities

The school should provide physical facilities and equipment which are adequate to permit achievement of the dental assisting program's objectives.

VIII CURRICULUM/LEARNING RESOURCES - Section 1070.1(f)

A. Content

Curriculum content specified in the regulation is considered basic. Programs administrators should not interpret subject areas as denoting or describing titles of specific courses in the curriculum but as subject areas that must be included in the program. General program objectives and specific instructional unit objectives should be stated.

B. Theory and Practice

Dental assisting subjects should include theoretical aspects of the subject as well as practical application. The theoretical aspect of the program should provide content necessary for the student to make judgements regarding the procedures she or he is expected to perform and to anticipate the dentist's needs during procedures which are usually performed in the practice of dentistry. The curriculum should be designed to provide students with basic understanding of all dental assistant and registered dental assistant procedures and the ability to perform such procedures with competence. Students should be provided with specific objectives and criteria evaluation for all aspects of the curriculum.

C. Innovation

Curriculum innovation and conduct of experimentation in educational methods are encouraged. The use of combination of related subjects in specific areas, or the use of core courses developed for a cluster of allied health disciplines also is acceptable. In such cases, it is expected that the courses will meet the needs of the dental assisting curriculum.

D. Evaluation

Specific criteria for measuring students' progress toward attainment of course objectives should be developed. On the basis of those criteria a student should be able to assess his or her training in relation to the objectives. Follow-up studies of graduates' activities and the correlation to instruction they received during the program should be made. Specific criteria for evaluation of dental assistant and registered dental assistant functions should be developed and used in pre-clinical and clinical instruction. The program should establish a standard of performance (i.e., determine the minimal number of satisfactory performances). Records of student performance on coronal polishing should be retained by the program for 5 years.

E. Clinical Experience

All registered dental assistant educational programs shall provide clinical facilities or clinical resources to facilitate training of duties assigned to the registered dental assistant. Students shall, as part of an organized program of instruction, be provided with sufficient clinical experience to obtain competency in all functions approved by the Board for performance by dental assistants and registered dental assistants and tasks taught in the specified curriculum of this section.

1. Variety of Experience

Sufficient clinical experience to attain competence in all functions performed by dental assistants and registered dental assistants shall be provided. Students should be assigned to offices or clinics where such clinical experiences are available. These factors and opportunities to assist chairside will be considered in determining the adequacy of clinical practice.

2. Student Records and Evaluation

Students should maintain a record of their activities to enable the faculty to determine the diversity of students' clinical experiences and make appropriate revisions in subsequent assignments to compensate for any deficiencies. Students shall be provided opportunities to meet as a group with their instructor to share their experiences.

3. Clinical Facilities

When extramural clinical facilities are utilized, a formal agreement shall be provided and the dental assisting program administrator or full-time faculty member shall be responsible for selecting clinical sites and for coordinating the clinical experience. Students' clinical experiences in these facilities shall be planned, supervised and evaluated in cooperation with participating dentists and their staffs. Clinical experience should include all dental assisting and registered dental assisting duties. To assure consistency in evaluating students' competence in performing procedures, objective evaluation criteria should be developed for use by the faculty and office or clinic personnel. Dental assisting program faculty shall make regular visits to the extramural facility for the purpose of monitoring evaluation procedures and feedback for the facility staff.

4. Orientation of Participants

The dentists who participate in clinical practice and their staff should be

oriented prior to the students' assignments to the offices or clinics. The orientation should include the objectives of the program with emphasis on dental assisting and registered dental assisting functions, the extramural experience, the preparation that the students have had for the clinical assignment and a review of procedures and criteria to be used in evaluating the students during their assignments. Students should be encouraged to evaluate their extramural learning experiences. An appropriate procedure, such as a definitive questionnaire, should be employed to help them do so.

G. Individually Paced Curriculum

Individually paced instruction is acceptable and may be used when the following conditions exist: Criteria for students' progress are based upon experience; the criteria are comprehensive, well defined and measurable; the number of faculty is sufficient to support supervision and instruction of students at various levels; and the laboratory capacity accommodates the unique and varying scheduling of this approach to instruction.

H. Structured Homework

To qualify as structured homework or required study, assignments must meet the following criteria:

1. Subject matter must be discussed in class before the assignment.
2. Each assignment must have a stated skill related objective and must relate to current instruction.
3. Feedback on the subject must be provided to each student.
4. A comprehensive examination must be administered at the completion of study of each subject.

M. Library

Adequacy of library holdings in dental assisting, registered dental assisting and related areas is evaluated according to their diversity, quality and availability to students and faculty. Specialized reference texts should be provided at least in the following subjects: Nutrition, preventive dentistry, dental materials, oral anatomy, oral physiology, oral pathology, morphology, pharmacology, microbiology, general dentistry, specialty dentistry, principles of practice management, chairside assisting, legal/ethical aspects of dentistry, radiology technique, sterilization technique, laboratory procedures and office emergency procedures.

New editions and titles should be acquired as content warrants. Publications more than 5 years old should not be used. Current and back issues of national journals related to dental assisting and to general and specialty dentistry should be available for student and faculty reference. Desk references should be provided for the faculty's use in developing instruction in the courses for which they are responsible.

Slides, films and other audio-visual materials which depict current techniques should be available for instruction in various courses.